



RICHMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING

June 28, 2023

West End Branch Library
5420 Patterson Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23226
Phone: 804.646.8833

11:45 a.m.





Richmond Public Library
 101 E. Franklin Street
 Richmond, VA 23219
 (804) 646-4256 / fax: (804) 646-7685



Library Board of Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, June 28, 2023

11:45 a.m.

AGENDA

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Call to order: | 11:45 a.m. | Mr. Yates |
| Agenda | | Mr. Yates |
| Consent Agenda: | | Mr. Yates |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of Minutes-May 24, 2023 Regular Meeting • Approval of Statistical Report • Approval of Pending Deposited Gifts Report | | |
| Public Comment Period: | | |
| Reports: | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Friends • Library Foundation • RPL Administration • Advocacy Taskforce • Early Literacy Update | | Ms. DeBoer/Mr. Dishon
Ms. Revere/Mr. Firestine
Mr. Firestine
Mr. Sawyer
Ms. Peterson |
| Board Committee Reports: | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair Report • Finance Committee • Facilities Committee • Governance Committee | | Mr. Yates
Mr. Sawyer/Mr. Firestine
Ms. Woody
Ms. Altman |
| Unfinished Business | | Mr. Yates/Mr. Firestine |
| New Business | | Mr. Yates |
| Adjourn | | Mr. Yates |
| Next Meeting: | | |
| Date: | July 26, 2023 Meeting | |
| Time: | 11:45 a.m. | |
| Location: | Belmont Branch Library
3100 Ellwood Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23221 | |

Library Board Meeting Minutes - DRAFT
May 24, 2023

PRESENT: Chair William Yates, Vice Chair Sheron Carter-Gunter, Emily Altman, Barbara Burton, Brent Graves, Christine Peterson, Janet Woody, Gail Zwirner

ABSENT: Garrett Sawyer, Friends of the Library Chair Ruth DeBoer

STAFF: Scott Firestine, Clay Dishon, Attorney Shannan Fitzgerald, Cheryl Clarke, Gianna Pack, Susan Revere, Phil Shephard, Hayley DeRoche

Meeting of the Richmond Public Library (RPL) Library Board of Trustees (LBOT) was called to order by Chair William Yates at 11:45am at the Westover Hills Branch Library located at 1408 Westover Hills Boulevard, Richmond, Virginia 23225. The meeting was posted and the public could attend in person or by viewing the Richmond Public Library YouTube channel <https://bit.ly/2VfKL9U>, where it was live streamed. A quorum was established.

Agenda	<p>Approve the May 24, 2023, Agenda. <i>Motion: Sheron Carter-Gunter, Second by Gail Zwirner</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>AYES: <u>7</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i></p> <p>Ms. Altman was not present for the vote.</p>
Consent Agenda	<p>Approve the April 26, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes, the Current Financial Reports, Statistical Reports, and Donations Report as submitted: <i>Motion: Chris Peterson, Second by Barbara Burton</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>AYES: <u>7</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i></p> <p>Ms. Altman was not present for the vote.</p>
Public Comment Period	None.
REPORTS	
<p>Friends of the Library (FOL)</p> <p><u>Clay Dishon</u> <u>Ruth DeBoer</u></p>	<p>Mr. Dishon reported on the Friends of the Library Operations in Ms. DeBoer’s absence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Big Spring Book Sale brought in approximately \$13,000. • May 5-6: Successful quick 1/2 Price and Bag Sale brought in around \$5,000. • Friends are working to clear the front area of the mezzanine at the Main Library, which was requested by RPL for library Tech Services operations – Ongoing. • Working to organize how the Friends can hold the two big book sales each year in the auditorium as an option – In process. • RPL Administration has offered corner space in the Main Library Reading Room for the Friends to have a larger and visual presence for daily book sales. The Friends are working on what will need to be purchased by them for the space and what the layout will need to be – In process.

REPORTS (CONTINUED)

<p>Library Foundation</p> <p><u>Susan Revere</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u></p>	<p>Ms. Revere reported on the Library Foundation Operations:</p> <p>Grant Activity/Partnership Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Library has been awarded a Fan District Association grant in support of system-wide Summer Programs in 2023 and 2024.• The Library has been awarded The Welcoming Library Collection through the Library of Virginia. A Welcoming Library is a pop-up conversation on immigration using a traveling collection, and can travel between schools, libraries, and community centers in each region, building an environment of welcoming and belonging.• Additional grants in process include the Mellon Foundation, Memorial Foundation for Children, REB Foundation, and Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation. <p>Ms. Burton commented that today was the last day for the RVA Reads Program in the preschools. She thanked Ms. Revere for her hard work with pursuing that grant. It brought much joy to the children when they saw the volunteers for RVA Reads come to the school; they know that they will be receiving a new book to take home. The program will start up again in October 2023. Ms. Burton encouraged other LBOT to give a day to volunteer and read to the children. It is very rewarding.</p>
<p>Administration</p> <p><u>Scott Firestine</u></p>	<p>Director’s Report: In addition to the items submitted on the Director’s Report in the Board Packet, Mr. Firestine reported on the following:</p> <p>Mr. Firestine announced North Avenue Branch Library is open as of May 22, 2023. He expressed his gratitude to all the staff that helped out to get the Branch up and running again.</p> <p>The 8th Annual Urban Fiction Event took place on May 20 at the Hull Street Branch Library this year. It was another successful year with over 200 people attending throughout the day.</p> <p>Referencing the April 26 meeting program statistics, Mr. Firestine mentioned the report was incorrect in the West End Branch Statistics of 11 attendees. Ms. Pack corrected the number in the report to 211 attendees.</p> <p>There was an informal reception for Library/Community Services Manager Kerry Phillips on May 23. Ms. Phillips is retiring on May 31 with over 15 years of service as a Branch Manager at the Ginter Park Branch Library. Old friends of the Advisory Committee, members of her Book Club, and staff showed up to wish her the best.</p> <p>RPL now has a quarterly publication called <i>What’s Happening</i>. The summer 2023 edition can be found at all library locations. This publication covers programming and events throughout the summer season. Members were excited for this new resource. Mr. Firestine expressed his gratitude to the Outreach and Engagement Team for their work. Ms. Woody asked if the publication could be distributed in other locations throughout the City other than libraries. Mr. Firestine said he would look into other partners for possible distribution.</p>

REPORTS (CONTINUED)

<p>Advocacy Task Force</p> <p><u>Sheron Carter-Gunter</u> <u>Garrett Sawyer</u></p>	<p>Vice Chair Carter-Gunter reported on Advocacy in Mr. Sawyer’s absence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Sawyer still editing the email communication. It will be out soon. The email will communicate the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maya Smart event tying into the Strategic Plan of childhood literacy. ○ Reinforcement of the money that will be used in the FY24 Budget year – The initial funding will allow RPL to restore staffing and programming in adult and child literacy, and increase operational hours, as well as expressing appreciation for those funds. ○ Vice Chair Carter-Gunter encouraged all LBOT to visit a neighborhood library and take a picture with staff.
<p>Early Literacy Update</p> <p><u>Christine Peterson</u></p>	<p>Ms. Peterson updated on Early Literacy activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Peterson reported going to the Maya Smart Event and mentioned it was an exceptional event. She also expressed her gratitude to the Foundation and the staff who helped with the event. • Ms. Peterson updated the LBOT on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Saturday programming – Hire summer interns in early June <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More programs than before ○ Specialist programs such as cooking, animals, etc. ○ Work with others in the space – Working with VPM, the Children’s Museum, Excell, and the Richmond Public Schools to do family fares in several libraries ○ Create new programs ○ Not enough time to do everything <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 5 year old Get Ready for Kindergarten Bootcamp – Postponed • Evaluation/Participation feedback – In process • Future Vision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cohort to Cohort collaboration ○ More programming on mothers and babies ○ Hire an Early Literacy person
<p>Chair Report</p> <p><u>William Yates</u></p>	<p>No formal report.</p>
<p>Finance Chair</p> <p><u>Garrett Sawyer</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u></p>	<p>Mr. Firestine reported Council introduced the Budget that was voted on May 8.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More funding for more hours, more staff ○ Starting July 1 budget increase to \$1.2M: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$18 starting wage ○ 8% wage increase across the board to all staff ○ Adding five FTE positions – Part-time and full-time staff to expand hours – Restorations of hours at Main, Ginter Park, and West End
<p>Facilities Chair</p> <p><u>Janet Woody</u> <u>Gail Zwirner</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u></p>	<p>Ms. Woody reported the Facilities Committee is working with Mr. Firestine on standards for library buildings. There were discussions of creating a Guiding Principle document of needs the community is requesting at branch libraries. Eventually there needs to be Master Plan for the Branches. After the LBOT discussion, the Facilities Committee will start on the Guiding Principle document for the RPL Branches as their next project.</p> <p>Since Mr. Graves is on the Facilities Committee, he will be the Liaison of the LBOT to the City Leadership and Development groups using his expertise in construction.</p>

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS (CONTINUED)

Governance Chair
Emily Altman

Ms. Altman reported on Governance activities. She announced Ms. Woody, Ms. Peterson, and herself were reappointed for a full second term. Chair Yates suggested reaching out to any of the interested people and see if they want to participate on a committee.

Ms. Peterson suggested the Governance Committee take a look at what the standards should be when choosing future LBOT members. Examples mentioned where:

- Having a LBOT from each district
- Ethnic Diversity
- Skill Sets

Ms. Altman will research the Bylaws and the City Charter to stay within the guidelines.

Ms. Peterson made a recommendation for an onboarding process to consider; having someone talk with new members as they are appointed. Chair Yates added the LBOT can make recommendations, but the Council appoints the candidates.

Ms. Altman encouraged the LBOT to send names of anyone they know who would be interested in serving of the board. She will reach out to them.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

No Unfinished Business discussed.

NEW BUSINESS

No New Business discussed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:49pm by unanimous consent from the members that were present.

The next regular meeting of the board will be held on Wednesday, June 28, 2023 at the West End Branch Library located at 5420 Patterson Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23226.

Approved: _____
Mr. William Yates, Chair

Recorder: Gianna Pack, CAP
Senior Executive Assistant

Director's Report

June 2023

Director Activities:

- Jun 6 Interviews for North Avenue Branch Library LCSM – Main
- Jun 7 RPLF June Board Meeting – West End Branch Library
- Jun 7 Mellon Q & A Live Webinar – Virtual
- Jun 7 Ideal Branch Plan with Facilities Committee – Main Library
- Jun 7 RPL Friends Board Meeting – Main Library
- Jun 8 Interviews for North Avenue Branch Library LCSM – Main
- Jun 8 Follow Up ECL Strategy/Grant/Metrics with Christine Peterson – Main Library
- Jun 12 Informal and City Council Meetings – City Hall
- Jun 13 Foundation Support to Library Discussion with Chair – Main Library
- Jun 13 Audit Committee Meeting – Virtual
- Jun 15 Pre-Planning Literacy Coalition Meeting – Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond
- Jun 19 Holiday – Juneteenth
- Jun 21 2023 FOIA Training – Virtual
- Jun 22 City of Richmond Annual Audit Kick Off Event – City Hall
- Jun 22 Richmond City Charter Review Commission – Richmond Police Department
- Jun 24 RPL Comicon Event – Main Library
- Jun 26 Library of Virginia Board Meeting
- Jun 28 Literacy Coalition Meeting – Community Foundation
- Jun 29 Chris Campbell LIVE! – Main Children's Area

○ Hiring Update:

- June 2023 Hiring Update:
 - 0107 FTE Ginter Park Branch Library/Community Services Manager – Candidate Review Phase
 - 0003 FTE Library Associate-Main – Candidate Review Phase
 - 0106 FTE North Avenue Branch Library/Community Services Manager – Candidate Selection Phase
 - 03TEMP PTE Main Office Assistant/Courier – Candidate Review Phase
- Main Library welcomes 03TEMP00123 (PTE) Early Learning Intern Ysanne Sterling on June 5 and 03TEMP00125 (PTE) Early Learning Intern Casey Clauberg on June 20

RPL Closings: Due to inclement weather and a blown transformer, the Main Library closed at 2:00pm on June 21. The Hull Street Branch also had power outages where the branch could not open in the morning hours, but was back up and opened in the afternoon.

Things to Celebrate: Stories from our locations of things to celebrate that happened during the month.

- **Broad Rock Branch Library:** People really appreciate our fax and notary services.
- **East End Branch Library:** On May 16, the Greening Project at the East End Branch Library began in earnest. Patrons and staff alike are incredibly excited to have this project underway and are eager to see the finished results. In particular we are excited to be able to finally enjoy using an outdoor space at the library.
- **Ginter Park Branch Library:** A patron and her now one-year old son asked to have a special birthday story time on his very first birthday in the library because he loves the library and the story times so much! It went great and the boy and all of his friends had a wonderful time!

Director's Report (Continued)

June 2023

- **Main Library:** May 11 – A patron interaction with Senior Library Technician Cynthia Jones. The patron was very impressed with the service she received. The patron expressed that Cynthia provided three ADA disability accommodations without being asked and not knowing that she had a communicative disability. Provided this service by scaffolding instructions on the use of a new library card. Patron said Cynthia was kind and amazing. Went on to speak highly of the library mentioning, “There are two places that assist making Richmond better-the Library and transportation.”
- **North Avenue Branch Library:** Reopened Branch on May 22, and the community are excited to see the new open space.
- **West End Branch Library:** Adding an additional Toddler Time on Wednesdays in summer. Local Master Gardeners volunteered their time from 4-6pm each Wednesday in April and May.
- **Westover Hills Branch Library:** Baby Arts Play continues to be a hit with parents and caregivers!

CIRCULATION FY23														
LOCATION	FY	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	Total
Belmont	FY19	8,429	8,074	8,103	7,888	7,303	6,144	7,099	6,630	8,077	6,712	6,436	7,110	88,005
	FY20	7,451	7,560	7,207	7,097	5,795	5,963	6,495	6,449	3,028	11	6	1,044	58,106
	FY21	4,292	4,463	3,675	3,715	3,895	3,662	3,663	3,576	3,888	3,924	5,400	6,455	50,608
	FY22	10,105	7,973	7,528	7,249	7,173	6,764	7,283	7,235	7,934	7,118	7,967	7,424	91,753
	FY23	8,400	9,297	8,586	8,967	7,642	6,982	8,312	8,167	9,161	8,345	8,716		92,575
Broad Rock	FY19	3,910	3,609	2,671	3,217	2,505	2,086	2,488	2,801	2,843	2,389	2,419	3,119	34,057
	FY20	3,652	3,036	2,939	2,998	2,323	2,389	2,331	2,347	1,166	5	10	291	23,487
	FY21	1,570	1,791	1,373	1,277	1,254	1,203	1,115	913	1,096	954	979	1,403	14,928
	FY22	2,105	2,733	2,315	2,073	1,945	1,579	1,545	1,502	1,667	1,624	1,641	1,581	22,310
	FY23	1,886	2,413	2,106	1,977	1,721	1,531	1,758	1,807	2,330	2,290	2,080		21,899
East End	FY19	2,996	2,648	2,614	2,820	2,587	2,176	2,915	2,451	2,249	2,046	2,087	2,534	30,123
	FY20	2,696	2,663	2,476	2,574	2,020	2,240	2,219	2,431	1,061	15	0	381	20,776
	FY21	1,431	1,738	1,493	1,493	1,599	1,621	1,673	1,427	1,575	1,539	1768	2,317	19,674
	FY22	2,519	2,799	3,073	3,039	3,149	2,993	3,230	2,928	2,992	2,897	3061	2,830	35,510
	FY23	2,898	3,313	2,951	2,837	2,246	1,990	2,671	2,600	2,487	2,526	2,519		29,038
Ginter Park	FY19	5,211	5,163	4,864	4,278	3,762	2,812	3,864	3,653	4,408	3,384	4,174	4,381	49,954
	FY20	4,397	4,580	4,030	3,823	3,332	3,021	3,599	3,327	1,690	0	0	736	32,535
	FY21	2,829	3,198	2,523	2,227	1,992	1,836	1,906	2,019	2,278	2,380	2,953	3,965	30,106
	FY22	4,175	4,452	4,292	3,990	3,754	3,074	3,671	3,585	4,340	3,877	4,015	4,821	48,046
	FY23	4,607	4,802	4,463	4,174	3,610	3,612	4,283	3,728	4,660	4,232	3,889		46,060
Hull Street	FY19	5,211	5,163	4,864	4,278	3,762	2,812	3,864	3,653	4,408	3,384	4,174	4,381	49,954
	FY20	4,397	4,580	4,030	3,823	3,332	3,021	3,599	3,327	1,690	0	0	736	32,535
	FY21	873	1,231	916	1,231	1,135	1,108	1,254	825	1,368	1,432	1,555	1,481	14,409
	FY22	1,884	2,141	1,986	2,144	2,014	2,475	2,397	2,324	2,634	2,361	2,065	2,046	26,471
	FY23	1,987	2,359	2,346	2,331	1,895	1,822	2,069	2,073	2,049	2,272	2,233		23,436

CIRCULATION FY23 (CONTINUED)

LOCATION	FY	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	Total
Main	FY19	8,719	8,877	8,655	9,774	9,099	8,202	9,418	8,749	9,621	9,177	8,795	9,300	108,386
	FY20	10,098	9,666	8,766	9,068	7,683	7,728	8,141	8,884	4,104	1,067	40	916	76,161
	FY21	4,804	4,167	3,259	3,252	3,164	3,266	2,909	2,750	3,071	3,714	4,652	5,589	44,597
	FY22	6,925	7,554	6,708	6,748	6,810	6,026	6,904	7,269	8,068	6,675	6,442	6,757	82,886
	FY23	7,932	9,457	8,777	8,957	7,149	6,313	8,304	8,189	9,523	8,891	9,053		92,545
North Avenue	FY19	2,979	2,493	2,709	2,918	2,390	2,059	2,604	2,264	2,367	2,887	2,243	2,657	30,570
	FY20	2,962	2,210	2,462	2,197	1,689	1,925	2,731	1,722	865	91	15	170	19,039
	FY21	692	820	695	526	750	891	689	566	870	1,345	2,007	1,878	11,729
	FY22	2,003	2,229	2,141	2,241	2,041	1,724	1,755	1,850	2,256	1,825	1,783	1,706	23,554
	FY23	2,139	2,118	2,085	2,378	2,367	1,743	949	77	Closed/Repairs		226		14,082
West End	FY19	11,660	11,438	10,076	10,172	8,539	7,313	9,145	7,434	9,007	8,380	8,746	9,681	111,591
	FY20	11,712	10,702	9,142	8,743	8,067	8,072	9,006	9,183	4,541	80	127	1,897	81,272
	FY21	6,888	6,701	5,819	5,107	5,039	5,639	5,192	4,873	5,769	6,685	9,084	10,859	77,655
	FY22	12,036	12,125	11,087	10,998	9,998	9,073	10,369	10,305	11,090	10,253	11,113	12,224	130,671
	FY23	13,150	13,412	10,950	11,072	10,121	8,552	10,395	9,966	10,771	10,338	10,968		119,695
Westover Hills	FY19	8,071	7,787	7,566	7,102	6,120	5,364	7,072	6,155	6,511	6,120	5,793	6,435	80,096
	FY20	7,419	7,175	5,888	6,137	5,631	5,376	6,043	6,342	2,946	70	8	1,561	54,596
	FY21	5,425	6,884	5,627	5,513	4,323	4,315	4,074	4,151	4,815	4,246	4,702	6,244	60,319
	FY22	7,604	8,163	7,214	8,653	7,649	6,836	7,650	6,983	7,908	7,144	7,833	7,803	91,440
	FY23	8,424	8,612	8,155	8,407	7,765	6,496	7,540	7,706	8,344	7,423	7,463		86,335
E-Content	FY19	5,985	6,407	5,683	5,581	5,278	5,874	6,375	5,874	6,532	6,132	6,424	6,798	72,943
	FY20	7,526	7,283	6,250	5,145	4,926	5,365	6,125	5,380	6,643	9,558	11,344	10,649	86,194
	FY21	12,811	12,564	11,976	11,413	10,990	13,742	14,912	15,034	15,990	12,429	12,782	12,108	156,751
	FY22	12,630	13,139	11,175	10,431	11,019	11,061	13,230	11,146	11,981	12,939	14,980	14,655	148,386
	FY23	16,079	16,510	14,806	14,910	15,126	16,515	19,182	17,810	23,496	24,317	24,593		203,344
Totals	FY19	63,171	61,659	57,805	58,028	51,345	44,842	54,844	49,664	56,023	50,611	51,291	56,396	655,679
	FY20	62,310	59,455	53,190	51,605	44,798	45,100	50,289	49,392	27,734	10,897	11,550	18,381	484,701
	FY21	41,615	43,557	37,356	35,754	34,141	37,283	37,387	36,134	40,720	38,648	45,882	52,299	480,776
	FY22	61,986	63,308	57,519	57,566	55,552	51,605	58,034	55,127	60,870	56,713	60,900	61,847	701,027
	FY23	67,502	72,293	65,225	66,010	59,642	55,556	65,463	62,123	72,821	70,634	71,740		729,009

PROGRAMS FY2023	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	TOTAL FY23	TOTAL FY22
Belmont														
Adult Programs	5	7	7	15	10	8	9	4	5	7	6		83	23
Adult Attend	18	34	23	98	95	63	56	20	27	27	23		484	239
Young Adult Programs	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0		5	0
Young Adult Attend	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0		2	0
Juvenile Programs	6	10	12	11	12	16	16	15	15	15	12		140	3
Juvenile Attend	36	56	59	75	81	194	160	141	242	192	182		1,418	23
Total Attend	54	90	82	173	176	258	217	161	269	219	205	0	1,904	262
Total Programs	11	17	19	26	22	25	26	20	21	23	18	0	228	26
Broad Rock														
Adult Programs	6	7	3	2	4	4	5	7	7	8	6		59	17
Adult Attend	4	5	3	4	4	6	7	79	13	25	21		171	130
Young Adult Programs	0	0	0	0	0	8	17	15	18	16	19		93	1
Young Adult Attend	0	0	0	0	0	19	25	32	9	28	2		115	4
Juvenile Programs	8	9	8	10	9	18	26	24	26	26	29		193	35
Juvenile Attend	48	39	21	67	30	63	102	113	92	101	115		791	207
Total Attend	52	44	24	71	34	88	134	224	114	154	138	0	1,077	341
Total Programs	14	16	11	12	13	30	48	46	51	50	54	0	345	53
East End														
Adult Programs	5	9	11	7	9	14	5	7	7	5	5		84	70
Adult Attend	31	105	117	64	37	28	13	76	109	31	84		695	610
Young Adult Programs	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	8	9	7	5		60	46
Young Adult Attend	13	25	20	60	33	28	17	51	59	25	38		369	469
Juvenile Programs	8	9	5	8	7	7	7	10	11	5	8		85	68
Juvenile Attend	131	196	63	146	95	137	174	297	279	129	248		1,895	978
Total Attend	175	326	200	270	165	193	204	424	447	185	370	0	2,959	2,057
Total Programs	18	23	20	20	20	25	16	25	27	17	18	0	229	184

PROGRAMS FY2023 (CONTINUED)	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	TOTAL FY23	TOTAL FY22
Ginter Park														
Adult Programs	2	0	2	1	1	4	6	7	8	7	12		50	6
Adult Attend	5	0	18	3	6	14	21	38	35	33	61		234	15
Young Adult Programs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0		7	0
Young Adult Attend	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0
Juvenile Programs	8	4	6	9	0	14	13	13	14	17	13		111	36
Juvenile Attend	90	6	14	73	0	60	119	73	83	96	128		742	89
Total Attend	95	6	32	76	6	74	140	111	118	129	189	0	976	104
Total Programs	10	4	8	10	1	18	19	20	22	31	25	0	168	42
Hull Street														
Adult Programs	4	0	4	3	0	0	0	1	3	1	1		17	12
Adult Attend	32	0	13	11	0	0	0	8	20	4	150		238	48
Young Adult Programs	1	0	0	1	3	2	3	1	1	1	0		13	0
Young Adult Attend	5	0	0	5	23	19	22	4	2	1	0		81	0
Juvenile Programs	0	4	1	3	0	3	3	9	4	15	14		56	15
Juvenile Attend	0	37	11	13	0	24	12	151	25	60	438		771	99
Total Attend	37	37	24	29	23	43	34	163	47	65	588	0	1,090	147
Total Programs	5	4	5	7	3	5	6	11	8	17	15	0	86	27
Main														
Adult Programs	14	6	9	7	7	9	9	11	4	19	25		120	75
Adult Attend	97	50	148	38	342	150	276	529	224	387	323		2,564	3,035
Young Adult Programs	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		3	17
Young Adult Attend	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		28	109
Juvenile Programs	20	13	19	0	16	19	17	16	16	16	18		170	117
Juvenile Attend	584	233	382	0	156	308	208	344	275	143	138		2,771	1,657
Total Attend	709	283	530	38	498	458	484	873	499	530	461	0	5,363	4,801
Total Programs	37	19	28	7	23	28	26	27	20	35	43	0	293	209

PROGRAMS FY2023 (CONTINUED)	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	TOTAL FY23	TOTAL FY22
North Avenue														
Adult Programs	6	3	1	8	8	5	0	0	0	0	1		32	56
Adult Attend	87	78	21	35	46	71	0	0	0	0	5		343	766
Young Adult Programs	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0		3	8
Young Adult Attend	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0		8	72
Juvenile Programs	4	5	4	5	4	5	0	0	0	0	0		27	15
Juvenile Attend	53	150	68	32	30	77	0	0	0	0	0		410	269
Total Attend	140	228	89	67	84	148	0	0	0	0	5	0	761	1,107
Total Programs	10	8	5	13	15	10	0	0	0	0	1	0	62	79
West End														
Adult Programs	6	6	5	9	5	5	5	5	7	6	5		64	30
Adult Attend	69	49	36	87	39	28	31	53	66	71	62		591	289
Young Adult Programs	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	1	1		11	4
Young Adult Attend	15	9	0	10	25	5	0	20	24	0	0		108	26
Juvenile Programs	13	13	17	10	10	10	12	9	9	13	12		128	128
Juvenile Attend	175	258	242	131	144	137	203	162	211	173	373		2,209	1,114
Total Attend	259	316	278	228	208	170	234	235	301	244	435	0	2,908	1,429
Total Programs	21	20	22	20	16	16	17	15	18	20	18	0	203	162
Westover Hills														
Adult Programs	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	2	1		12	32
Adult Attend	0	2	2	4	4	0	5	10	18	9	5		59	237
Young Adult Programs	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		11	7
Young Adult Attend	17	18	9	20	5	12	14	2	7	7	15		126	87
Juvenile Programs	8	4	6	6	6	8	6	7	6	5	5		67	68
Juvenile Attend	450	197	223	248	180	208	334	407	280	164	304		2,995	1,953
Total Attend	467	217	234	272	189	220	353	419	305	180	324	0	3,180	2,277
Total Programs	10	6	8	8	8	9	8	9	9	8	7	0	90	107
Grand Total Attend	1,988	1,547	1,493	1,224	1,383	1,652	1,800	2,610	2,100	1,706	2,715	0	20,218	12,525
Grand Total Programs	136	117	126	123	121	166	166	173	176	201	199	0	1,704	889

DOOR COUNT FY2023	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	TOTAL
Belmont	4,384	4,811	4,456	4,528	3,360	3,767	5,142	4,808	5,121	5,014	4,428		49,819
Broad Rock	3,121	3,601	3,380	2,968	2,264	2,271	2,963	3,349	3,478	3,789	3,540		34,724
East End	2,911	4,224	3,375	3,532	3,037	2,923	3,322	3,223	3,625	3,469	3,780		37,421
Ginter Park	4,441	4,216	4,043	4,906	3,840	3,763	4,993	4,514	5,898	4,274	4,273		49,161
Hull Street	4,335	4,300	4,433	4,887	3,993	4,048	4,231	3,936	1,930	1,842	2,218		40,153
Main	9,271	8,207	8,739	6,897	5,688	5,037	6,100	7,357	6,485	7,147	Broken		70,928
North Avenue	8,278	8,504	3,634	3,751	3,033	3,123	Location Closed for Repairs				536		30,859
West End	3,653	3,333	2,643	2,718	4,034	2,159	2,531	2,599	2,921	2,788	3,054		32,433
Westover Hills	4,011	3,831	3,637	3,592	1,988	2,195	380	Broken	1,151	4,404	4,984		30,173
TOTALS FY23:	44,405	45,027	38,340	37,779	31,237	29,286	29,662	29,786	30,609	32,727	26,813		375,671
TOTALS FY22:	30,685	32,619	32,702	35,028	34,519	35,716	36,999	31,189	37,658	38,159	37,378	45,822	428,474
TOTALS FY21:	15,077	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17,689	15,223	23,380	74,369
TOTALS FY20:	81,759	79,026	71,250	70,158	57,245	52,729	62,154	64,890	30,917	-	-	-	570,128
TOTALS FY19:	70,641	73,411	62,975	66,230	62,257	48,425	63,139	60,259	67,552	68,862	67,399	70,910	782,060

NOTE(S):

1. North Avenue Branch Library: Starting January 2023, North Avenue Branch closed for building repairs due to water damage from a pipe busting during winter storm.
2. Westover Hills Branch Library: Starting January 2023 door counter was going bad. Ms. Clarke called for a quote to fix or replace item.
3. Main Library: Door counter broken in May 2023 – No Reading.

COMPUTER USE FY2023	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	TOTAL
Belmont Workstation	721	769	650	689	495	462	675	587	661	615	678		7,002
WIFI	731	660	654	605	538	554	656	696	538	483	578		6,693
Broad Rock Workstation	761	890	770	666	531	543	638	702	788	670	759		7,718
WIFI	492	478	371	401	289	382	407	444	663	586	761		5,274
East End Workstation	839	963	703	774	560	609	585	670	692	678	675		7,748
WIFI	633	642	786	863	648	707	776	700	771	943	1,018		8,487
Ginter Park Workstation	489	612	585	548	400	413	688	699	812	640	766		6,652
WIFI	509	461	502	519	396	408	558	564	615	541	609		5,682
Hull Street Workstation	467	693	561	556	488	433	482	471	620	544	537		5,852
WIFI	502	726	682	806	790	825	879	851	855	978	1,082		8,976
Main Workstation	1,498	1,971	1,787	1,741	1,234	1,341	1,785	1,662	1,621	1,509	1,618		17,767
WIFI	2,565	2,900	2,884	3,059	2,639	2,456	2,640	2,640	2,831	2,806	3,406		30,826
North Avenue Workstation	683	606	633	640	471	424	-	-	-	-	97		3,554
WIFI	383	390	423	507	469	423	152	122	84	107	164		3,224
West End Workstation	324	373	337	342	323	288	359	342	340	308	359		3,695
WIFI	749	717	626	803	578	618	730	776	821	837	778		8,033
Westover Hills Workstation	615	643	655	580	480	473	603	580	679	578	559		6,445
WIFI	469	436	527	558	506	475	591	539	597	552	581		5,831
TOTALS FY23:	13,430	14,930	14,136	14,657	11,835	11,834	13,204	13,045	13,988	13,375	15,025	-	149,459
TOTALS FY22:	7,868	7,453	7,484	10,192	7,706	7,583	8,709	8,046	9,346	10,404	10,819	11,897	107,507
TOTALS FY21:	6,529	1,836	2,417	2,660	2,907	2,853	2,116	1,842	2,413	3,544	4,354	6,353	39,824
TOTALS FY20:	28,117	28,674	26,036	27,447	21,130	22,167	25,353	25,300	12,723	1,500	792	1,612	220,851
TOTALS FY19:	21,141	23,182	20,857	28,103	23,493	22,565	27,068	24,764	28,491	26,105	28,577	26,512	300,858

TECHNICAL SERVICES - FLOATING ITEMS ADDED / DISCARDED				
FY2023	Printed Materials Added (All Branches)	Overdrive Added	Monthly Total Added	Monthly Total Discarded
Jul-22	2,623	-	2,623	299
Aug-22	3,021	3,284	6,305	526
Sep-22	1,480	-	1,480	-
Oct-22	774	702	1,476	383
Nov-22	1,258	481	1,739	315
Dec-22	1,523	417	1,940	210
Jan-23	2,566	931	3,497	447
Feb-23	2,406	403	2,809	403
Mar-23	8,067	2,973	11,040	1,616
Apr-23	2,155	856	3,011	567
May-23	2,837	397	3,234	484
Jun-23				
FY23 Totals:	28,710	10,444	39,154	5,250
FY22 Totals:	17,756	5,387	23,143	2,117
FY21 Totals:	21,250	3,156	24,406	5,391

NOTE: Printed Materials Added Monthly is now one number (not per Branch), as items are not added to specific Branch when ordered (holdover from pre-floating days).

NEW PATRON CARDS													
FY2023	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	Total
Belmont	128	147	125	109	115	50	169	137	100	123	106		1,309
Broad Rock	64	72	65	64	47	38	60	77	75	46	64		672
East End	79	61	59	68	44	38	52	59	54	45	55		614
Ginter Park	38	38	43	31	24	21	30	24	23	31	35		338
Hull Street	90	86	121	76	77	54	69	91	79	80	130		953
Main	203	280	262	208	176	164	277	255	220	225	204		2,474
North Avenue	64	99	75	69	41	31	0	0	4	0	17		400
West End	96	102	63	72	52	47	74	60	70	60	60		756
Westover Hills	81	91	83	88	62	66	69	72	86	94	75		867
Online Reg E-Card	491	522	470	432	397	408	543	495	456	467	555		5,236
Total FY23:	1,334	1,498	1,366	1,217	1,035	917	1,343	1,270	1,167	1,171	1,301		13,619
Total FY22:	1,055	,218	1,064	,467	1,072	879	1,209	984	979	957	1,017	1,170	13,071

Richmond Public Library
 FY23 Operating Budget
 as of May 31, 2023

ACCOUNT	DESCRIPTION	Budget	Actual and Encumbered 31-May-23	% Spent	Balance Available 31-May-23
60000	SALARIES - FULL TIME	\$ 3,229,685	\$ 3,095,130	95.8%	\$ 134,555
60001	OVERTIME PERMAN	\$ 19,176	\$ 6,882	35.9%	\$ 12,294
61000	SALARIES - PART TIME	\$ 187,631	\$ 133,621	71.2%	\$ 54,010
62000	SALARIES - TEMPORARY	\$ 60,000	\$ 25,939	0.0%	\$ 34,061
63000	FICA	\$ 221,213	\$ 193,225	87.3%	\$ 27,988
63001	RET CON RSRs	\$ 795,579	\$ 681,514	85.7%	\$ 114,065
63002	MEDCARE FICA	\$ 53,276	\$ 45,329	85.1%	\$ 7,947
63003	GROUP LIFE	\$ 20,331	\$ 19,174	94.3%	\$ 1,157
63006	H/C ACT TEMP	\$ 664,768	\$ 562,212	84.6%	\$ 102,556
63008	STATE UNEMPLOYMENT	\$ -	\$ 138	0.0%	\$ (138)
63011	HEALTH SAVINGS	\$ -	\$ 8,563	0.0%	\$ (8,563)
64104	EDUCATION PAY	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
64105	BONUS PAY	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
64110	VRIP INCENTIVE	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
	Personnel Expenses	\$ 5,251,659	\$ 4,771,726	90.9%	\$ 479,933
71141	BOOKS	\$ 952,359	\$ 721,018	75.7%	\$ 231,341
71141	DATABASES	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
71142	MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTS	\$ 2,456	\$ 11,504	468.4%	\$ (9,048)
72122	MAGS & NEWSPAPER	\$ 29,277	\$ 21,720	74.2%	\$ 7,557
	Collection Development	\$ 984,092	\$ 754,242	76.6%	\$ 229,850
70131	ADVERTISING	\$ 2,297	\$ 250	10.9%	\$ 2,047
70161	PLANNING MGMT SERVICES	\$ 223,055	\$ 454,469	203.7%	\$ (231,414)
70218	VEHICLE REPAIR	\$ 2,902	\$ 1,313	45.2%	\$ 1,589
70412	TRANSPORTATION	\$ -	\$ 619	0.0%	\$ (619)
70311	PRINTED SUPPLIES	\$ 3,000	\$ 5,968	198.9%	\$ (2,968)
70413	MILEAGE ALLOWANCE	\$ 2,263	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 2,263
70551	SECURITY	\$ 298,993	\$ 260,562	87.1%	\$ 38,431
70552	CONTRACT AND TEMP PERSONNEL	\$ 22,000	\$ 96,557	438.9%	\$ (74,557)
71012	OFFICE STATIONARY SUPPLIES	\$ 3,047	\$ 8,165	268.0%	\$ (5,118)
71016	ADVERTISING	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
71143	LIBRARY OPERATING SUPPLIES	\$ 19,220	\$ 7,836	40.8%	\$ 11,384
72113	POSTAGE	\$ 4,456	\$ 1,816	40.8%	\$ 2,640
72121	CONFERENCES & CON	\$ 1,904	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 1,904
72123	MEMBERSHIP DUES	\$ 677	\$ 254	37.5%	\$ 423
72124	TRAINING	\$ 1,055	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 1,055
72131	COMPUTER SUPPLIES	\$ 25,662	\$ (5,959)	-23.2%	\$ 31,621
72153	EQUIPMENT	\$ 12,200	\$ 6,290	0.0%	\$ 5,910
73104	BANK FEES	\$ -	\$ 10,435	0.0%	\$ (10,435)
76119	PAGERS	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
76652	PAPER PRODUCTS	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
77103	FUEL-D/O VEHICLE	\$ 2,298	\$ 1,540	67.0%	\$ 758
77104	VEHICLE MONTHLY STANDING	\$ 493	\$ 452	91.7%	\$ 41
77201	INTERNAL PRINTING	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
77501	DIT CHARGES	\$ -	\$ 3,232	0.0%	\$ (3,232)
80001	DEPRECIATION	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
80004	BUILDINGS & STR	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
80006	EQUIPMENT & OFFICE MAINTENANCE	\$ 7,160	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 7,160
80007	VEHICLE EXPENSES	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
95002	OPERATING TRANS	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
	Other Expenses	\$ 632,682	\$ 853,798	134.9%	\$ (221,116)
	TOTAL GENERAL FUND	\$ 6,868,433	\$ 6,379,766	92.9%	\$ 488,667

RICHMOND PUBLIC LIBRARIES - General Fund Budget

Monthly Budget Report

May 31, 2023

<u>General Fund Revenue</u>	<u>FY2022-23 Budget</u>	<u>FY2022-23 Actual YTD</u>	<u>% Recognized</u>	<u>Unrecognized</u>
Lost and Damage Books	\$ 21,782	\$ 6,568	30%	\$ 15,214
Reservation - Book Records	\$ 500	\$ 450	90%	\$ 50
Room Rental Fees	\$ 300	\$ -	0%	\$ 300
Sales Copy Centers	\$ 17,476	\$ 8,619	49%	\$ 8,857
State Library Aide	\$ 170,000	\$ -	0%	\$ 170,000
	<u>\$ 210,058</u>	<u>\$ 15,637</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>\$ 194,421</u>

General Fund Operating

	<u>FY2022-23 Budget</u>	<u>FY2022-23 Actual YTD</u>	<u>% Expended</u>	<u>Unobligated</u>
Personnel	\$ 3,496,492	\$ 3,261,571	93%	\$ 234,921
Fringes	\$ 1,755,167	\$ 1,510,155	86%	\$ 245,012
Books/Materials	\$ 984,092	\$ 754,242	77%	\$ 229,850
Operating Expenses	\$ 632,682	\$ 853,798	135%	\$ (221,116)
Total	<u>\$ 6,868,433</u>	<u>\$ 6,379,766</u>	<u>93%</u>	<u>\$ 488,667</u>

Encumbrances YTD \$ (60,788)

RICHMOND PUBLIC LIBRARIES - Special Fund Budget

<u>Special Fund Revenue</u>	<u>FY2022-23 Anticipated</u>	<u>FY2022-23 Actual YTD</u>	<u>% Recognized</u>	<u>Unrecognized</u>
00314 - Gift to the Library	\$ 12,500	\$ 49,991	0%	\$ (37,491)
00308 - Verizon E-Rate Grant	\$ 75,000	\$ 69,201	92%	\$ 5,799
00309 - Public Law Library	\$ 167,797	\$ 126,730.00	76%	\$ 41,067
00311 - Gates Foundation	\$ 28,750	\$ -	0%	\$ 28,750
00312 - RPL Foundation	\$ 18,000	\$ -	0%	\$ 18,000
00313 - Friends of the RPL	\$ 18,000	\$ -	0%	\$ 18,000
00000 - FNDN Restricted Grant	\$ -	\$ -	0%	\$ -
	<u>\$ 320,047</u>	<u>\$ 245,922</u>	<u>77%</u>	<u>\$ 74,125</u>

<u>Special Fund Expenditures</u>	<u>FY22 Rollover & FY23 Receipts</u>	<u>FY2022-23 Actual YTD</u>	<u>% Expended</u>	<u>Unobligated</u>
00314 - Gift to the Library	\$ 228,529	\$ 11,398	5%	\$ 217,131
00308 - Verizon E-Rate Grant	\$ 132,295	\$ 29,389	22%	\$ 102,906
00309 - Public Law Library	\$ (243,763)	\$ 143,437	-59%	\$ (387,200)
Personnel		\$ 13,623		
Fringes		\$ 2,648		
Books/Materials		\$ 126,994		
Operating Expenses		\$ 172		
00311 - Gates Foundation	\$ (1,721)	\$ -	0%	\$ (1,721)
00312 - RPL Foundation	\$ (121,614)	\$ 75,748	-62%	\$ (197,362)
00313 - Friends of the RPL	\$ 42,643	\$ 10,282	24%	\$ 32,361
	<u>\$ 36,369</u>	<u>\$ 270,254</u>	<u>743%</u>	<u>\$ (233,885)</u>

Encumbrances YTD \$ 24,260

Richmond Public Library
 Foundation, Friends, Groups and Individual Donations
 FY 2023

Consent Agenda: Deposited Gifts Over \$100 Shown
 as of June 28, 2023

Date of Check	Donor Name	Current Month Amount	Purpose/Location	YTD Account Balance		
				Gift	Foundation	Friends
	<i>No Donations</i>					
	Monthly Total	\$ -				
	YTD Total	\$ 600.00	Year To Date Total	\$ 600.00	\$ -	\$ -

Have You Been to the Library Lately?

Librarians once worried about shushing patrons. Now they have to deal with mental health episodes, the homelessness crisis, and random violence

*By: Nicholas Hune-Brown and Illustration by Dorothy Leung
(Updated 8L05, Jun. 12, 2023 | Published 6:30, Jun. 12, 2023)
Website: The Walrus- <https://thewalrus.ca/future-of-libraries/>*

THE ONTARIO Library Association Super Conference is the largest annual gathering of bookish public servants in the country. The days-long event at the sprawling Metro Toronto Convention Centre is both an industry trade show and the de facto meeting spot for all of Canada’s librarians—a place to catch up on the latest in cataloguing, hobnob with distant colleagues, and take stock of the state of the library.

On a bitterly cold Friday this February, the final day of the 2023 event, vendors in the exposition hall upstairs were busy hawking everything from book-moving services to exotic animal visits. Former Toronto mayor David Miller sat alone at the University of Toronto Press booth, surrounded by copies of his latest hardcover, while a buzzy line formed down the aisle for signed copies of a picture book about a giant beet. Downstairs, in the corporately neutral confines of meeting room 202D, a full house had gathered to talk about one of the burning issues at the heart of the modern public library.

Rahma Hashi, a social worker with a bright smile and a beige head scarf, began the session. Over the past decade or so, in response to the waves of vulnerable people arriving at their doors, many North American libraries have begun hiring in-house social workers. Hashi was one of Toronto Public Library’s first. Part of her role, she explained, was to make partnerships with shelters, with the idea that the library should always be a welcoming place for everyone but the real work of providing service to people who are homeless should be handled by the professionals.

The reality is somewhat different. In Toronto, over the past few months, Hashi explained, there were about 11,000 people experiencing homelessness, according to the city’s count. That’s around 11,000 people who may be coming in to a library space to warm up during the day, she said. Some branches are open later than other social services, and most shelters in Toronto had been full anyway, so library workers were often asked to do the impossible—find shelter for someone in a system that often had no room. “When people come to us at the eleventh hour, when we’re closing, and they say, ‘Can you help me find a bed for tonight?’ we call Central Intake, and they’re at 100 percent capacity.”

Vicky Varga, a twenty-four-year veteran of Edmonton Public Library, described how the city had moved toward fully integrating social work into the activities of its main library branch. “People really do seek this out, because it’s the last truly public space, as I’m sure everybody in this room knows,” she said.

It’s an evocative phrase—“the last public space.” It’s one I heard over and over while reporting this story, often invoked as a kind of badge of honour. For the library CEOs who need to justify their budgets to unsympathetic city councils, the phrase emphasizes the importance of their institutions: like the “last old-growth rainforests” or “the last Galápagos tortoises,” “the last public space” sounds like something we should probably spend some money to preserve.

As a description of the role of the library, the phrase is also a remarkable illustration of how far the institution has come. Libraries were once places to access books. They are now places to access everything? The last place to access anything? As the social safety net has frayed, libraries have found themselves filling in the gaps. The conversation in room 202D that afternoon was the sound of library workers struggling with the reality that, despite their best efforts, an institution organized around lending out hardcovers might not be up for the job.

Every library branch in every city has its own specific issues, but in conversations with workers across the country, the broad strokes of the crisis are the same. Librarians say they're seeing more people with more complex needs than ever before. In Toronto, the number of recorded "incidents," a term which includes violent, disruptive, or threatening events, spiked from 7.16 per 100,000 visits in 2012 to 35.74 in 2021. In Edmonton, where librarians are offered training to administer naloxone, 2022 saw ninety-nine opioid poisonings across the system. On Vancouver Island, some workers went on strike for nearly two months over workplace concerns and a lack of wage growth. In a letter to library trustees, they argued that "management has refused to agree to many important proposals—including solutions to workplace violence and mental health impacts." Library workers across the country report being attacked, spat on, threatened, sexually assaulted. They describe the emotional toll that results from not having the necessary resources to help the people who come to them, day after day. They talk about picking up the phone to call for help and realizing that nobody's coming.

When the floor opened for questions that afternoon in Toronto, hands shot up. A grey-haired man wanted to know how many social workers Edmonton had hired. "Winnipeg just added its third, and there just aren't enough hours in the day for the demand," he said quietly. "How are you going to increase support for staff?" asked a woman near the front. A man mentioned that, because some of Toronto's branches that have more difficult patrons are unpopular among staff, the least experienced, least senior employees often end up working there.

"What is the next step?" asked a woman from Vancouver Public Library. It was the question that seemed to be on everyone's mind. People, she said bluntly, were dying. "At what point do library workers, managers, directors speak directly to governments?"

The speakers murmured vague answers about each person doing their best to make change within their own realm, but the truth was there were no good answers. The session ended, and the attendees shuffled out into the vast carpeted expanse of the convention centre. But in the months since, that conversation has continued—in discussions between library CEOs, in meetings between union leaders, and in chats between harried workers on their breaks: What is the next step? Where does the library go from here? Because it's clear that being "the last public space" isn't a privilege. It's a sign that something has gone terribly wrong.

LIBRARIANS ARE a remarkably collegial group, quick to praise one another. Ask them which libraries are doing interesting things, and they'll talk about Halifax's gorgeous Central Library and Edmonton's innovative social programs, Vancouver's community work on the Downtown Eastside and the herculean feat of running Toronto's 100 branches, one of the biggest library systems in North America, with nearly 1.2 million cardholders and about 10.6 million items in its collection. "One that we all admire incredibly, not only for the building but for their innovation, is Calgary Public," said Mary Chevreau, CEO of Kitchener Public Library.

Calgary is a surprising mecca on the Prairies. It's one of the largest systems in North America, with 57 percent of Calgarians carrying a library card. The new Central Library, which opened in 2018, is an architectural wonder: a six-level ark rising up over a light rail line. A curling tunnel of cedar at the entrance leads patrons into a lofty, pleasingly off-kilter atrium that does the thing that parliaments, cathedrals, and other great buildings are supposed to do: create awe and uplift—the feeling that you are in a place where something of significance is happening. The building was responsible for putting Calgary on the *New York Times* list of “52 Places to Go” in 2019 and was included in *Time* magazine’s 100 “World’s Greatest Places” that same year.

I visited early one morning in February, a mild chinook wind blowing in over the mountains and the building’s trapezoidal windows glowing warmly against the electric-blue dawn. At 8 a.m., an hour before opening, a small crowd had already gathered outside the doors. The branch is located in Calgary’s East Village and was intended to revitalize a corner of the city that had long been neglected. The Salvation Army is next door, with other drop-ins and social services clustered in the area. Most of the people outside were single men—smoking cigarettes, carrying duffle bags, whiling away the time.

There is a sense of theatre in the moments before the opening of a big public building, a hushed current of anticipation before the action. Inside, workers trickled in, shedding their heavy winter coats and putting on the library’s bright-blue vests. In the quiet atrium, you could hear the gentle whirr of the “Bookscalator,” a long conveyor belt that shuttles tomes from the return slot downstairs up to the second floor to be sorted. At 8:50, three security guards came down the elevators to their stations by the entrance. And then it was showtime, the doors swinging open and a stream of patrons wandering in—college students clutching iced coffees even in February, thickly bearded middle-aged men who looked like they’d been sleeping rough, a kid in a Spider-Man costume who entered excitedly and then immediately demanded his mother carry him because his “body is tired.”

Sarah Meilleur, the forty-three-year-old CEO, took in the scene. Meilleur is a small and sprightly die-hard library nerd who has the Dewey Decimal number for books about librarians tattooed on her ankle. She is a lifer, beginning her time at Calgary Public Library shelving books after university and then slowly working her way to the top job in 2021. “I didn’t necessarily think I would be a leader or a CEO,” said Meilleur brightly. “I just loved the work. I think, in libraries, you feel like you make a difference every day.”

As a bookish only child, Meilleur remembers going down to Memorial Park Library with her parents to get her first library card. That location, a stately building on a landscaped park, was Calgary’s first. It was opened in 1912 and funded by Andrew Carnegie, the steel industrialist and philanthropist who used more than \$55 million (US) of his fortune, an astronomical number at the time, to build 2,509 public libraries around the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including 125 in Canada. Carnegie, who only donated to municipalities committed to funding the maintenance and operation of the library, catalyzed this country’s public system. Often with vaulted ceilings and ornate architecture, Carnegie libraries were designed to inspire the masses. They were places to access books, that great democratizing force. “There was no use to which money could be applied so productive of good to boys and girls who have good within them and ability and ambition to develop it, as the founding of a public library,” Carnegie wrote in his autobiography.

In the decades that followed, the core purpose of the library remained the same. People deserved access to books, books were expensive and best shared, and so an entire infrastructure and profession sprung up around that fact. Soon, armies of workers were needed to shelve books and process magazines and journals. Librarianship became a vocation, with attendant degrees and graduate programs and associations.

That version of the library is now gone. “Libraries have seen more change in the past twenty years than at any time in the past hundred,” architecture professor Brian Edwards wrote in 2002. The years since have only solidified that transformation. The rise of the internet meant that one of the reference librarian’s main functions could now be done with the click of a mouse. RFID tags and other forms of automation meant that those armies of workers were no longer needed behind their desks, sorting books, and would need to find new roles.

At the time, countless articles asked if new technology meant “the death of the public library.” Instead, the institution completely transformed itself. Libraries carved out a new role providing online access to those who needed it. They abandoned the big central desk, stopped shushing patrons, and pushed employees out onto the floor to do programming. Today, you’ll find a semester’s load of classes, events, and seminars at your local library: on digital photography, estate planning, quilting, audio recording, taxes for seniors, gaming for teens, and countless “circle times” in which introverts who probably chose the profession because of their passion for Victorian literature are forced to perform “The Bear Went over the Mountain” to rooms full of rioting toddlers.

In the midst of this transformation, new demands began to emerge. Libraries have always been a welcoming space for the entire community. Alexander Calhoun, Calgary’s first librarian, used the space for adult education programs and welcomed “transients” and the unemployed into the building during the Depression. But the past forty years of urban life have seen those demands grow exponentially.

In the late 1970s, “homelessness” as we know it today didn’t really exist; the issue only emerged as a serious social problem in the 1980s. Since then, as governments have abandoned building social housing and rents have skyrocketed, homelessness in Canada has transformed into a snowballing human rights issue. Meanwhile, the opioid crisis has devastated communities, killing more than 34,000 Canadians between 2016 and 2022, according to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#). And the country’s mental health care system, always an underfunded patchwork of services, is today completely unequipped to deal with demand. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, from 2020 to 2021, Canadians waited a median of twenty-two days for their first counselling session. As other communal support networks have suffered cutbacks and disintegrated, the library has found itself as one of the only places left with an open door.

Today, when Meilleur describes the role of the library, it’s as “a place for community connections and a place for people to come together to dream big.” It’s where people go to fill in online applications for government assistance and print out immigration forms in duplicate. It’s a shared office for students and workers stuck in overcrowded apartments. It’s one of the last places you can go to warm up or use the washroom, where you won’t be hustled along by security or forced to buy something.

If books remain the library’s brand, they are no longer its primary focus. In 2015, Calgary trimmed its collection by about 13 percent and relocated tens of thousands of texts from its shelves, according to the *Calgary Herald*, following a trend of libraries “managing down” their print collections. Many of those books are still available for order, stored off site in a warehouse somewhere, but Calgary’s branches themselves are noticeably light on printed material, leaving more space to do the programming, meeting, and hanging out that are now at the core of their mandate.

When people tell the story of this transformation, from book repository to social services hub, it's usually as an uncomplicated triumph. A recent "[love letter](#)" to libraries in the *New York Times* has a typical capsule history: "As local safety nets shriveled, the library roof magically expanded from umbrella to tarp to circus tent to airplane hangar. The modern library keeps its citizens warm, safe, healthy, entertained, educated, hydrated and, above all, connected."



That story, while heartwarming, obscures the reality of what has happened. No institution "magically" takes on the role of the entire welfare state, especially none as underfunded as the public library. If the library has managed to expand its protective umbrella, it has done so after a series of difficult decisions. And that expansion has come with costs.

FROM LATE 2020 to early 2021, University of Toronto information science professor Siobhan Stevenson conducted a survey of front-line library workers in four public systems in Canada, asking them about their experiences of violence and incivility.

The results painted a picture of a predominantly female profession that could be difficult, traumatic, and sometimes dangerous. About two-thirds of respondents reported feeling unsafe, from a few times a month to a few times a week. As many as 84 percent had been victims of verbal intimidation, while 75 percent had experienced an unwelcome invasion of personal space or physical intimidation. Four percent said they had been the subject of an attempted rape.

"I have been threatened with violence on a number of occasions, knifed and punched in the face," one respondent reported. "Verbal threats of rape, at least once a month," said another. "As time passes, I have felt more unsafe in my workplace—which surprises me," said a third. "I love my job but it has changed dramatically over the last few years for the worse."

One Toronto library worker I spoke with, who asked not to be named for fear of professional reprisal, described conditions many library workers were completely unprepared for and a management slow to admit there was a problem. "So many people go into library school because they have an image that they will be cataloguing or selecting books or dealing with people's reading interests," he said. "No, you're not." The reality, he said, was closer to working in a neighbourhood bar. "Some bars have a quiet clientele. And some are nasty and violent."

These problems aren't unique to libraries. In every public place, the evidence of a social welfare system that has been chipped away at for decades is on display. In early 2023, a series of violent incidents erupted on Toronto transit. The city's response was simple: they threw police at the problem. If you barred a certain category of person from the bus, perhaps the larger systemic issues would take care of themselves.

For both ideological and practical reasons, libraries do not have that option. "We can't lock the door, we're for everyone. So that is the starting point," says Åsa Kachan, CEO of Halifax Public Libraries (and chair of The Walrus's Educational Review Committee). The library's openness is the best thing about it, but it also creates inherent challenges. "The tension is between genuinely wanting to be a welcoming, open space for everyone. And then, at the same time, keeping staff safe," says Stevenson.

According to some workers, management is not doing enough to uphold the second half of that equation. “We have found that there has been an uptick in terms of violent incidents in the libraries, and the library as an employer has been very slow to respond to that,” says Brandon Haynes, president of the Toronto Public Library Workers Union. Part of the reason for the slow response, Haynes believes, is management’s desire to protect the library’s image. “There’s a real concern, and I think it’s a valid concern, with portraying the library as a safe and welcoming space that’s open and accessible to everyone,” says Haynes. There are worries that if a beloved institution becomes known as a dangerous, unpleasant place, both visits and funding could suffer. “But I think we can’t just hide the voices of the library workers,” says Haynes. “I think that in order to address the problem, you need to actually put a spotlight on it and not sweep it under the rug.”

The desire to put a good face on things can extend to front-line staff themselves. “This idea that the library is all important and can do no wrong kind of pushes library staff to do more and more and use more and more of their time and energy to the point where folks are burning out,” says Heather Hill, chair of the master of library and information science program at Western University.

Talk to library workers and you’ll find people eagerly going beyond any reasonable description of their duties. The average library page—the precarious workers, often students, who shelve, tidy, and organize books—makes \$16.50 an hour at Toronto Public Library. Librarians—all of whom have master’s degrees—earn between \$72,054 and \$81,372 a year. Both are on the front lines, and both have seen their responsibilities expand, doing work today that might otherwise be done by a social worker, an early childhood educator, a harm-reduction expert, a therapist, or a settlement worker.

In Calgary’s Saddletowne branch, Kelly Stinn, a soft-spoken library veteran in a cardigan, told me she was concerned about what she has been seeing since the start of the pandemic. “We’re seeing a lot more people that are leaning on the library more heavily, just because the service that might have been there previously is either overextended, changed their mandate, or no longer exists,” she says. One patron walked in recently and just burst into tears. She didn’t know anyone in Canada, had never had mental health counselling before, and didn’t know where to turn. Stinn calmed her down. She set her up with an appointment and asked if she needed a bus ticket or taxi chit to get downtown. “At one point, she just said to me, ‘Can I have a hug?’” Stinn remembers. So she gave her a hug.

Stinn was noticing something else as well—an increase of kids in serious mental distress. They were emerging from years of lockdowns and illness with debilitating anxiety. Parents were noticing their children struggling in school. According to the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#), children are experiencing extreme stress due to the pandemic. And three out of four can’t get the care they need, either because it’s unavailable or not covered by health insurance. Many of them were ending up at the library, and Stinn felt utterly unequipped to help them. So last summer, she started a graduate certificate in children’s mental health at the University of Calgary. “At least if I have a better understanding, I can share that with the staff here,” she says.

The work of people like Stinn is inspiring. But a country’s immigration settlement programs or children’s mental health care can’t be dependent on underpaid librarians getting extra graduate degrees. Heather Hill points to a 2018 journal article by Fobazi Ettarh, “Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves,” that set off conversations among her colleagues. Casting the work of libraries as holy and beyond reproach, Ettarh argues, puts unreasonable, unsustainable expectations on workers to act as saints, as pillars of democracy. “Adding duties like life-or-death medical interventions to already overstrained job requirements is an extreme but very real example of job creep,” Ettarh writes. “The library’s purpose may be to serve, but is that purpose so holy when it fails to serve those who work within its walls every day?”

The changing atmosphere in libraries can be difficult to talk about. “I think sometimes even library workers and librarians, who are usually left of centre on some level, find their own ideological commitments challenged,” says Stevenson. “Nobody wants to say, ‘I actually don’t want to deal with that overdose in the washroom. I’m not comfortable dealing with someone who is experiencing a serious mental health crisis. I didn’t take this job for that.’”

One worker from Winnipeg became emotional when talking to me about her job. (Staff aren’t allowed to speak to the press, and the city denied an interview request.) She explained that threats and verbal abuse were common, and dealing with erratic behaviour was par for the course. As a veteran of more than ten years, she wasn’t particularly sensitive. But it was clear to her that, in recent years, the library was being asked to do far more than it could sustain. “It just becomes this really small space where all the issues that are in society are just magnified,” she said. Staff, she told me, were regularly being retrained in de-escalation techniques, seemingly with the idea that perhaps new training or a new attitude could mitigate the need for more funding or more employees or a functioning supportive housing system. “I spend a lot of time thinking, ‘Is this really what my job is now?’ And what is the library? I don’t even think I know anymore,” she said. “I don’t remember the last time I actually did my real job.”

One of the issues that made her most upset, however, was how her experiences and those of her co-workers were dismissed by advocates who valued the work that libraries were doing with the vulnerable without seeming to value the workers themselves. “I think what makes it worse is to be minimized and treated like I don’t have the right to safety,” she said through tears. “I find that extremely hurtful.” She’d noticed a lot of early retirements among colleagues. A lot of sick days. A lot of leaves of absence. “People have just gone.”

There are no easy solutions to any of this. In early 2019, after staff reported a rise in violent incidents, Winnipeg’s Millennium Library took the unprecedented step of introducing airport-style security at its entrance. Patrons were searched with metal-detecting wands. They had their bags checked, with anything deemed dangerous confiscated.

The move led to protests. A community group called Millennium for All produced a report arguing that the presence of heavy security deterred marginalized people from using the library. Would a homeless person, carrying all their possessions, submit to having their bags searched? Would a Black or Indigenous visitor who had bad experiences with the police simply avoid the building? “This barrier leads some of the people who benefit most from library services to avoid the library, effectively limiting their access,” the report read.

The number of violent incidents did fall. But so, too, did the number of people using the library. Instead of serving the community, the library was pushing people out into the cold. About a year after they were implemented, the extra security measures were scrapped.

Then, on December 11, 2022, twenty-eight-year-old Tyree Cayer was fatally stabbed after an altercation at Millennium Library. Four teenagers between the ages of fourteen and sixteen were charged with his death. The library closed for about two weeks as administrators tried to figure out how to respond. When it fully reopened, a walk-through metal detector had been installed, and police officers were stationed at the door.

OVER THE months I spent writing this story, I drifted from library to library. I set up my laptop in Saddletowne in Calgary as groups of gangly teenagers crunched themselves into tiny nooks in the kids' area because, as the librarian told me, "teens like to be tucked away." I went to my local Toronto branch and let my six-year-old forage for as many books about cheetahs as he could find. I used the free Libby app to borrow a digital copy of *The Library Book* by Susan Orlean and the free Hoopla app to stream the first thirty minutes of *The Public*, a well-intentioned but very boring Emilio Estevez movie about a group of homeless people taking over a Cincinnati library. I walked into the soaring atrium of the Toronto Reference Library, probably my favourite building in the city, and was hit with the feeling, so rare in modern life, of being in a beautiful, thoughtful place created and maintained for my benefit—a place that wanted nothing from me other than to make my life marginally better. A public place.

Today, library leaders are recognizing that these public places may have reached the limits of their capacity. According to Pilar Martinez, the CEO of Edmonton Public Library and the chair of the safety and security working group that the Canadian Urban Libraries Council assembled this January, it was time to put some "guardrails" on what libraries ought to be doing with their resources.

There had been talk about a library branch providing clothing to patrons, for example. It was a serious community need, after all, and a place where the library could conceivably step in. But was that their role? And while the three social workers they'd hired in Edmonton had made a huge impact, Martinez said, "that's just not an area that we're going to grow and provide library resources and funding to add additional social workers." Librarians like Martinez were drawing a line. There was the sense, she said, that the Band-Aid solutions they had been trying to provide may even have been obscuring the severity of the problems from governments. It was time to demand help from people outside the building.

"I think what happened is, for a long time, libraries swung in one direction, which is 'We don't do anything but books,'" says Amanda French, the manager of social development at Toronto Public Library. "And then they swung wildly in another direction, which is 'We do everything. We do everything.'" Now she sees libraries swinging back to a more sustainable equilibrium.

That approach, however, requires governments to ease that burden. As libraries have taken on more responsibility, they haven't seen a simultaneous increase in funding. If a public library wants to hire another social worker, does that mean they need to wait for a librarian to leave? Putting cops at the door in Winnipeg rather than hiring more support staff may make sense considering the police's budget is about \$327 million, ten times higher than the library system's allocated funds, and this year's police budget increase was about ten times higher too.

Fixing libraries means more funding to bring up staffing levels to give workers the support they need. But it also means doing things that are much more difficult: building more social housing, hiring more social workers, investing in mental health workers, schools, community centres, and everything else needed to address problems before they reach the library's doors. Libraries have proven themselves to be incredibly adaptative, contorting themselves into various shapes to serve the needs of their communities. That's another favourite librarian saying: "A good library reflects its community." But that goes both ways. A troubled community is reflected in its libraries. And if the social problems of twenty-first-century life continue to grow with little restraint, they will inevitably find their way into the city's last public places.

In *Palaces for the People*, Eric Klinenberg’s insightful 2018 book about the importance of “social infrastructure,” he writes: “Everyday life in libraries is a democratic experiment.” There are few other institutions that take as their constituency *everyone*. Democracy, of course, is messy. None of that work is magical. It’s grinding, difficult, always compromised. But watching a library function—doing the mundane, day-to-day work of accommodating an entire city within its walls—is also remarkable.

That February morning in Calgary, when the doors opened, visitors scattered to every corner of the building. Prince, a twenty-five-year-old international student from Ghana, set up his laptop on the third floor to study, as he does most days. A sixty-seven-year-old retired carpenter browsed the shelves, finally selecting a copy of Anne Applebaum’s *Twilight of Democracy*, before heading downstairs to the cafe to meet a friend. Jeff, a fifty-five-year-old in a big black hoodie, who was staying at the drop-in centre nearby, went straight to the laptop collection on the fourth floor and checked out a Chromebook to look for a landscaping job in the spring.

Sneha, meanwhile, sat at a little wooden table in the children’s area with her four-year-old son, Joshya, who was contentedly filling a large sheet of butcher paper with intricate crayon drawings. That morning, they’d come down from their home in the northeast with her husband, who was working at the Salvation Army next door, and now they were spending the day here—reading picture books, choosing DVDs and CDs to take home, using the climbing structure built in the kids’ area.

Sneha said that this was Joshya’s first time at Central Library, but they were regulars at their home branch. It was the perfect place to bring a kid too young for school, a spot to find playmates. Sneha had been a dentist in India but was still finding her footing here, and through the library, she was taking a free online course in medical office administration that, she hoped, would help lead to work. They’d arrived only a few months before. Everything was still new, and life in a big foreign city could be difficult. But Sneha and her family were doing okay. They had found their way to the library.

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